

Copulative and Narrative Patterns in Gur Focus Constructions

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1 Characteristic of *ex-situ* focus constructions

- focalization of term, verb and predication is possible in canonical position (+/- morphologically marked) (cf. column 1 and 2)
- subject focus or sentence focus on the other hand are always morphosyntactically encoded (cf. column 3)
- any non-subject constituent including nominalized verb can also be focalized *ex-situ* (cf. column 4)

1. Focus system in affirmation

Scope of focus	1. complement / complex VP	2. verb / predication		3. subject / sentence	4. non-subject
Structure	SVxO	SV(O)x	SVx	SVx(O) Konni SxV(O) others	OS(x)V Konni OxSV others
Buli	<i>ká</i>	<i>ká-mā</i>	<i>-y(a)</i>	<i>lē</i>	<i>tè</i>
Konni	<i>-wÁ, -Á¹</i>	<i>mìŋ</i>	<i>-yÁ</i>	<i>-nÀ</i>	<i>(di)²</i>
Dagbani	<i>lá</i>	<i>mì</i>	<i>-ya</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>kà</i>
	pure focus constructions			-/ + topical status of sentence-initial constituent	
	<i>absolute pattern</i>			<i>copulative pattern</i>	<i>narrative pattern</i>

Focus as pragmatic and not necessarily marked notion:

“The focal information in a linguistic expression is that information which is relatively the most important or salient in the given communicative setting, and considered by S[peaker, A.S.] to be most essential for A[ddressee, A.S.] to integrate into his pragmatic information” (Dik 1997: 326)

¹ aspectually differentiated: *-wÁ* in the perfective, *-Á* in the imperfective

² only after lexical subject

Assertive and contrastive focus subtypes apply to:

(a) term focus, (b) verb focus: verb's lexical meaning, (c) predication focus: predication operators (including *verum* / auxiliary focus) (cf. Hyman & Watters 1984; Güldemann 2003)

2 The absolute pattern (transitive example)

- WH-diagnostics: focus on object (*What has she eaten?*) or on VP including a postverbal complement (*What has she done?*).

What has the woman eaten?

She has eaten [beans]_F.

2. Buli: ò ɲòb kà túé.
 CL eat FM beans

3. Konni: ò ɲòbì-wá túò.
 CL eat-PF:TR beans

4. Dagbani: ò dì-lá túyà.
 CL eat-FM beans

Buli: S V KA F

Konni: S V-WA F

Dagbani: S V-LA F

The verb shows tonal agreement with the discourse role of the subject in indicative (perfective) environments.

3 The copulative pattern

- WH-diagnostics: focus on subject (*Who has eaten (something)?*) or on sentence (*What has happened? What's the matter?*)

3.1 Structural features

Who has eaten the beans?

[Mary]_F has eaten them.

5. Buli: (ká) mǎrỳ àlē ɣòbī. *ɣòb
 (FM) Mary LE eat

6. Konni: mǎrỳ ɣóbí-nà hà.
 Mary eat-NA CL

7. Dagbani: mǎrỳ ń-dí-lì.
 Mary N-eat-CL

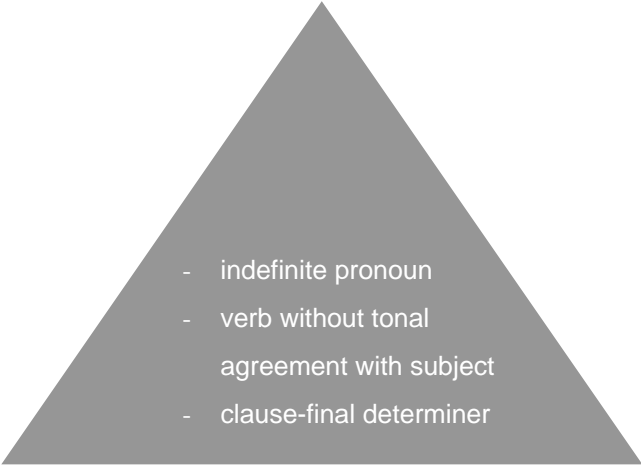
Buli: F LE verb_{inf}

Konni: F verb_{inf}-NA

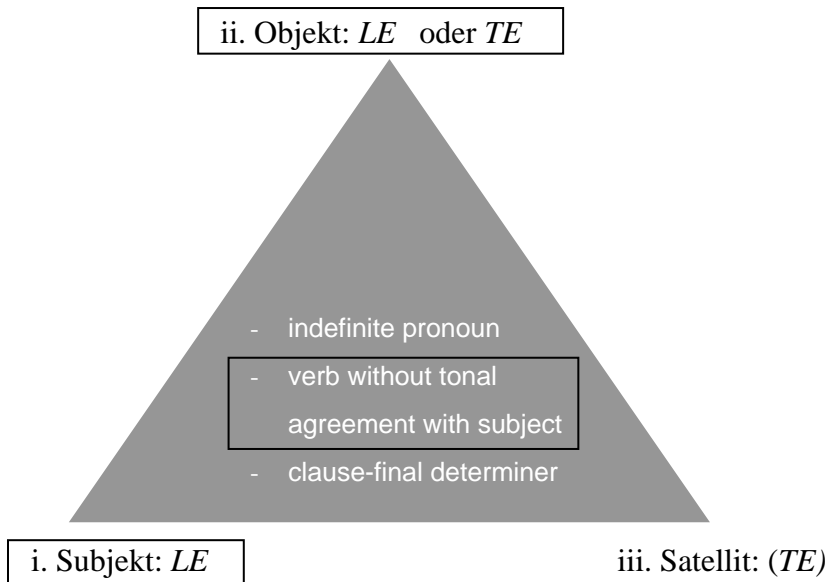
Dagbani: F N verb_{inf}

3.2 Comparison with relative clause

- structural features of relative clauses with restrictive reading shared throughout the **language sample**:

- 
- indefinite pronoun
 - verb without tonal agreement with subject
 - clause-final determiner

- restrictive relative clauses in **Buli**:



8a. **REL** **núró-bāā** **lē** **chèŋ** **lā** ...
 person-CL:IND LE go DET
 The people which have left, ...

8b. **F** **núrumá** **lē** **chèŋ**.
 person.DEF LE go
 The [people]_F have left.

- restrictive relative clauses in **Konni**:

9a. **REL** **bùà-díéké** **dì** **nígí-nà** **fù** **wà** ...
 child-IND:CL DI hit-NA 2sg DET
 The child that has hit you, ...

9b. **F** **m̀** **bùàwá** **yúágí-nà**.
 1sg child.DEF bec.sick-NA
 My [child]_F is sick.

- restrictive relative clauses in **Dagbani**:

10a. **REL** **á-n** **!ɲmé dó-só** **máá ...**
 2sg-NI hit man-IND:CL DET
 The man whom you have hit, ...

10b. **F** **dóó máà ń-dúyí-lì.**
 man DEF N-cook-CL
 The [man]_F has cooked them.

Only part of the relative clause features are shared by SF (and NSF): use of a subordinating morpheme close to the verb and occurrence of an infinite verb form without tonal subject agreement.

→ SF construction contains a hypotactic predicate which conveys background information as a non- restrictive relative clause

4 The narrative pattern

- WH-diagnostics: focus on sentence-initial non-subject constituent
- The *ex-situ* focalization is however in most cases not just triggered by a simple WH-question, but requires certain ongoing debate, before the sentence-initial non-subject constituent is chosen as topic to be commented on.

4.1 Structural features

11. Buli: (**ká**) **john tè mī fòb.** ***fòbī**
 (FM) John TE 1sg:I hit
 I have hit [John]_{F/T}.

12a. Konni: túò, ú ḡḡbì.
 beans CL:H eat
 She has eaten [beans]_{F/T}.

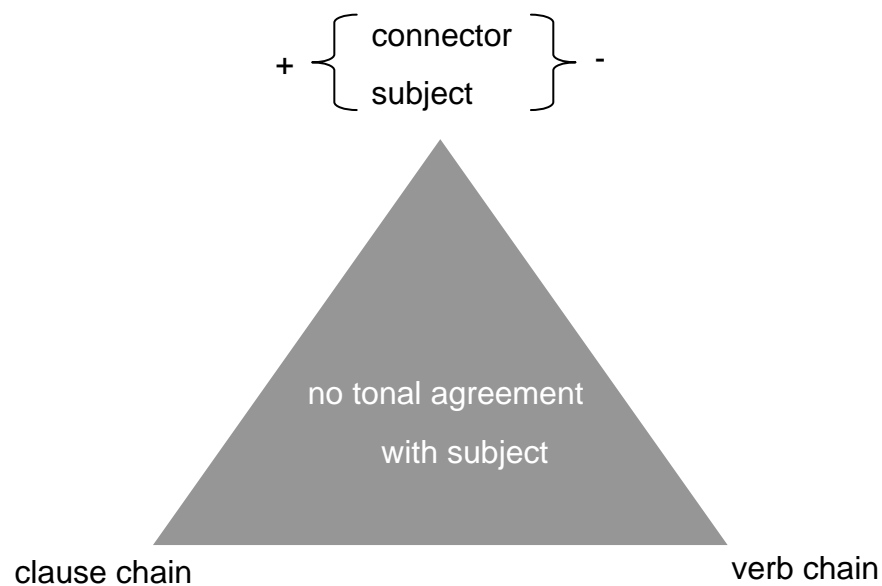
12b. **wà, ò hògòwá dí gá.**
 Wa 1sg wife.DEF DI geh
 My wife has gone to [Wa]_{F/T}.

13. Dagbani: **túyá kó-!ó dī.**
 beans KA-CL eat
 She has eaten [beans]_{F/T}.

Buli:	T/F	<i>TE</i>	<i>S</i>	Verb _{ntr}
Konni:	T/F	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} S_{\text{Pron:H}} \\ S_{\text{Nom}} \text{ DI } \end{array} \right\}$		Verb _{ntr}
Dagbani:	T/F	<i>KA</i>	<i>S</i>	Verb _{ntr}

4.2 Comparison with narrative clause

- available structures for the expression of sequential events in indicative:



- sequential clauses in narration in **Buli**:

14a. A woman had three children,

NAR **tè wà yāā tòṃ bí-kpāgní ...**

TE CL then send child-head.DEF
and she sent the eldest child ...

14b. ... the youngest child brought the tomatoes home,

NAR **tè wà dìg.**

TE CL cook
and she (mother) cooked them.

- sequential clauses in narration in **Konni**:

15a. There were a woman and her three children,

NAR **ó tòṃ jà-kùòrí ...**

CL:H send thing-eldest.DEF
and she sent the eldest child ...

15b. to go and buy tomatoes for her to cook soup

NAR **bùàwá dí nàgì síé-gáàṅ ...**

child.DEF DI follow road-?different
and the child took a different road ...

- sequential clauses in narration in **Dagbani**:

16a. A woman was standing with her three children,

NAR **kà ò tòm bí-kpíám ...**

KA CL send child-big
and she sent the eldest child ...

- 16b. ... the youngest child brought the tomatoes to the mother,
NAR **kà ó má !déé kà níŋ sùhù-píèlì.**
 KA CL mother take KA do heart-wide
 and his mother took them and was happy.

There is complete structural identity between the “non-focal” part of NSF and a sequential clause type used in narration.

→ NSF contains a paratactic predicate which conveys the comment on a marked non-subjectival topic

5 Conclusion

Ex-situ SF and NSF constructions:

- follow information structural principles above the simple clause level and can be analyzed as topic-marking strategies (rather than simply focalizing)
- are used whenever the grammatical subject does not also represent the topic of a clause: *ex-situ* SF introduces entities as major discourse topics independent from the narrative chain of events, *ex-situ* NSF introduces entities with respect to certain events

[+ topical subject]: (a) *canonical predicate: absolute pattern*

= categorical statement

[- topical subject]: (b) *hypotactic predicate: copulative pattern*

= topiclessthetic statement, predicate provides supportive and descriptive backgrounding information (clausal topic) on which events can be based on; imperfective affinity

(c) *paratactic predicate: narrative pattern*

= marked topic followed by clausal comment, predicate provides events to develop narration further, perfective affinity

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